food security, a decision was taken in April, 2006 to import a further 30 lakh tonnes of wheat.

(b) and (c) As per the present procurement policy, the Government agencies carry out Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations in wheat producing areas. However, the farmer is free to sell his produce to the Government agencies or private traders, including large private companies, as is advantageous to him.

During RMS 2006-07, there has been higher private participation in wheat procurement. To procure sufficient quantitites of wheat, the Department of Food & Public Distribution has formulated a proposal to purchase foodgrains at a rate higher than the MSP.

Ban on export of sugar

1219. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact Government have banned the export of sugar for the next nine months to keep the rising prices down;

(b) if so, the details of extent to which it will help to control the rising prices; and

(c) the details of steps taken by Government to control the rising prices of other necessary things like vegetables, pulses, etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) The Central Government, *vide* notification dated 4th July, 2006, has banned export of sugar till the end of current financial year, that is, up to 31.3.2007. Since the prices depend upon a number of factors, it is not possible to isolate the effect of ban on export of sugar on prices.

(c) Government has already taken steps to arrest the increase in prices by taking measures such as augmenting domestic, supplies through imports at reduced duty rates, ban on exports of pulses and sugar and regular monitoring of prices of essential commodities. Other steps taken include advice to State Governments to initiate steps to ensure availability

of essential commodities at reasonable prices. These steps taken by the Government have generally stabilized the prices.

Sale of products on MRP

1220. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that several products including in the field of electronics, computer, stationery, food items, etc. are being sold much below the MRP that they carry;

(b) whether this does not render the much publicized campaigning regarding MRP redundant; and

(c) the steps taken so far/proposed by Government to ensure that MRP remains the real selling price or just close to it so that the consumer gets a fair idea of the selling price of any commodity and the consumers are not cheated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) The declaration of MRP on packaged commodity is decided by the manufacturer taking into various factors. As per the provisions of the Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977, it is obligatory on the part of the retail dealer not to sell above the MRP declared on the package. The consumer awareness campaign is aimed at educating the consumer to not to pay more than the MRP and also to bargain on the MRP to get lower price.

(c) In order to ensure that manufacturers print MRP that have relationship with the cost of production/intended sale price, the Government have amended the Central Excise Act, 1944 to provide for levy of Excise duty on the basis of MRP declared on the package in respect of notified commodities.